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Tomie dePaola

Strega Nona's HARVEST

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SHARE A FEAST WITH *Strega Nona*

Every year Strega Nona carefully plants her seeds and uses her magic touch to grow her garden. Her helper Big Anthony figures he should be able to grow a garden too. But Big Anthony is not careful. Soon he has a jungle on his hands—*Mamma mia!* What will they do with all these vegetables?

Tomie dePaola has been delighting readers with tales of the wonderfully wise Strega Nona and her bumbling sidekick Big Anthony for generations. With his trademark charm and humor, he has created another delicious tale perfect for family sharing.

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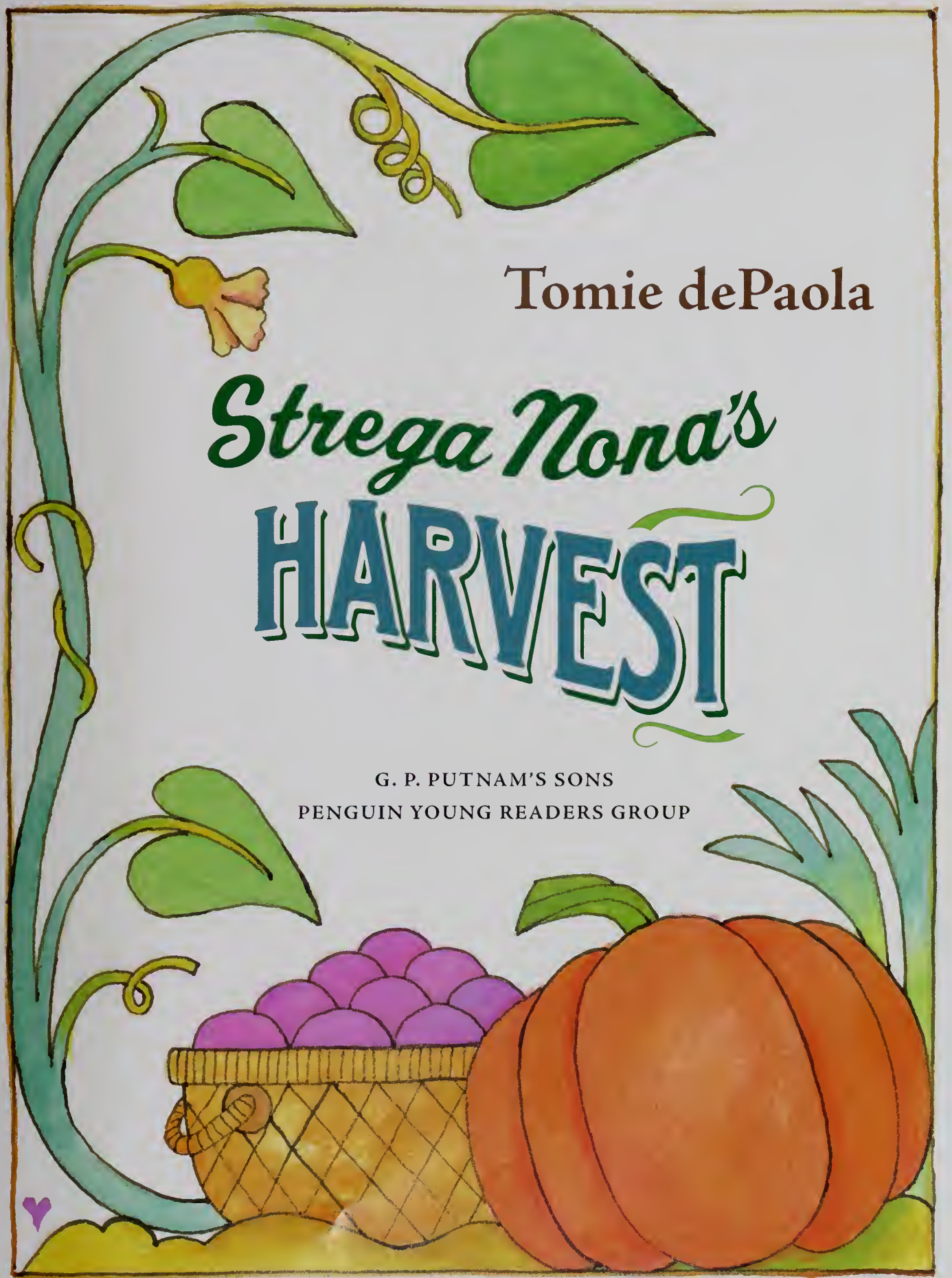

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G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
PENGUIN YOUNG READERS GROUP

For Greg and all the fine folks
at Spring Ledge Farm

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and sows another garden willy-nilly, then must find a way to deal with the consequences.
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It was spring, and all the snow had melted. The rich earth was beginning to warm. Strega Nona pulled out a small wooden box that had been hidden away in the dark cupboard all winter.

"Aha," she said as she took out small packets of seeds she had saved from last year's garden. "*Qui siete, i miei amici piccoli*—here you are, my little friends."

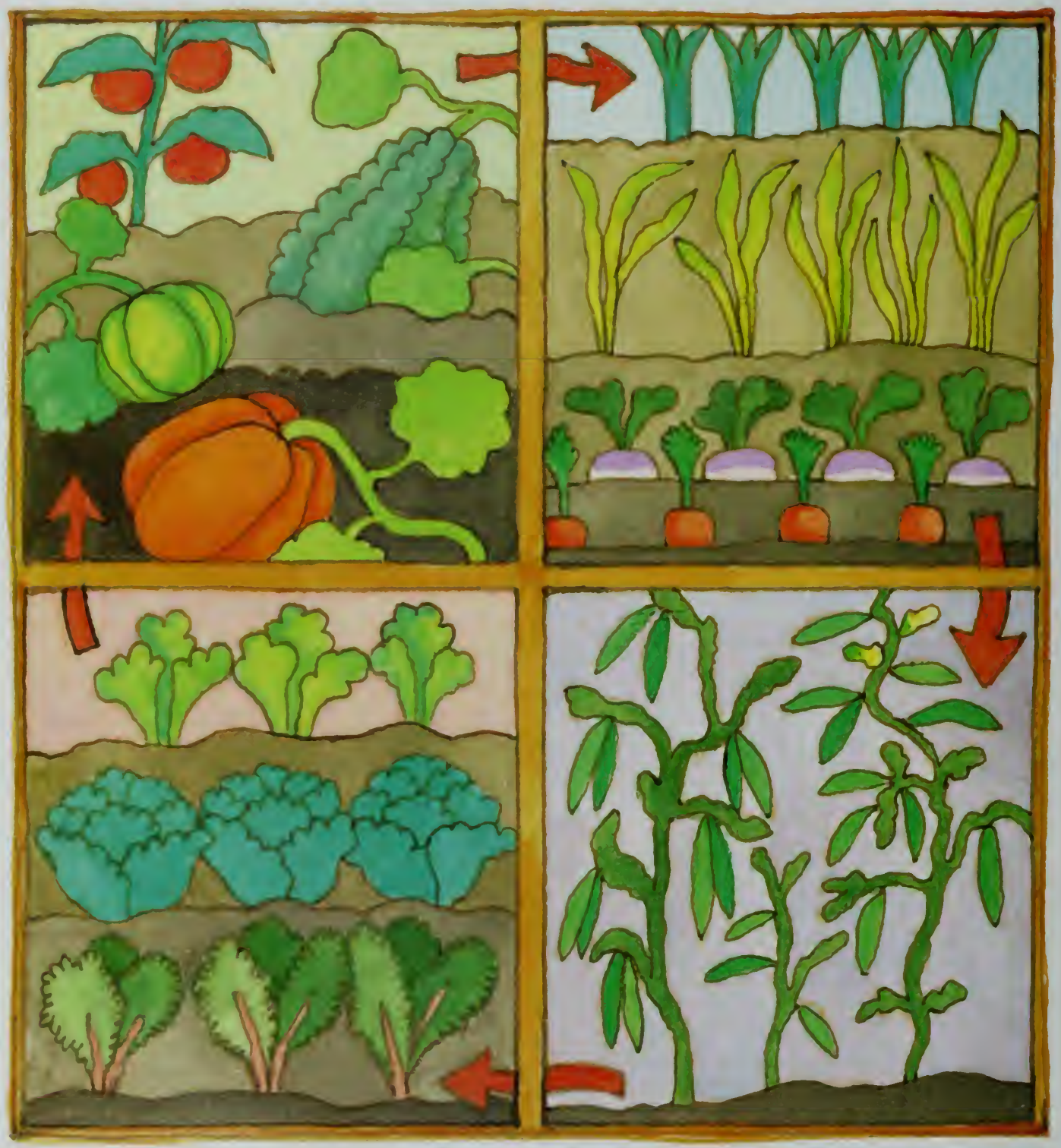
"Why were all those seeds in the dark, Strega Nona?" Big Anthony asked.

"Well, *mio caro*—my dear," Strega Nona answered, "they had to rest, just like you do, so they will be able to do their job when we plant them in the garden."

"When will we plant them, Strega Nona?" Bambolona asked.

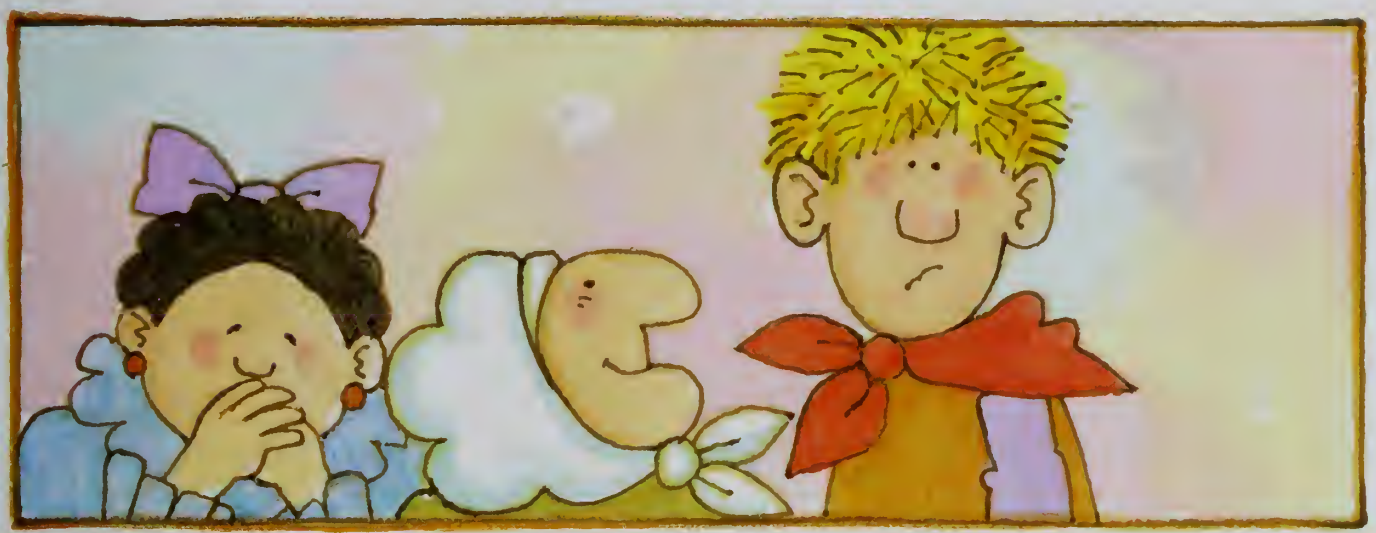
"When *la luna*—the moon—tells us, Bambolona. Then we will plant each kind of seed carefully in the right place. After all, we can't just throw the seeds into the ground in a big pile! A garden must be orderly so it is easy to pick the vegetables."

"Now, let me look in my *libro di giardino*—Garden Book—to see what we did last year."



Every year, Strega Nona wrote down in her book what she planted, when and where. She never put the same vegetables in the same spot.

"We have to move them around," she told her young helpers, "so the soil will stay happy and strong. But first, Anthony, you must spread the compost and manure we saved all winter and rake it into the soil so our vegetables will grow as big and beautiful as can be."



So, Big Anthony put a clothespin on his nose and did his job.

"Children, come," called Strega Nona. "It is almost the end of *Maggio*—May—and there will be a full moon tonight. It is time to plant. Now, Anthony, I want you to make nice straight rows in the soil with the end of the hoe. That's where the seeds will go."

"Big Anthony," Bambolona scolded, "you're not making the rows straight enough. You know that Strega Nona likes everything Perfect!"

She added, "And so do I!"

Bambolona is so bossy, Big Anthony thought. *Someday, I'll show her I can do something perfect, too.*

ZUCCA
ZUCCA
MELANZAN
PISELLO
CAVOLO
POMODORO
ZUCCHINO
CARCIOFO
FAGIOLO
MELONE

That night, when the full moon rose in the sky, Strega Nona quietly crept out to the garden. She looked up at the moon and sang:

O *Bella Luna*, smile on me,
And on the seeds I sow,
And let the moonbeams shine from thee,
To make my garden grow.

"And now for the *ingrediente segreto*—secret ingredient."

Strega Nona blew three kisses to the moon.

"Oh," said Big Anthony as he watched her. Suddenly he spied some seeds that had dropped on the ground. "I know. I'll plant my OWN *perfect* garden behind the goat shed. I'll *show* Bambolona!"

So, Big Anthony poked some holes in the ground. He threw in the seeds and covered them with compost and manure. He watered and watered.

Then he sang Strega Nona's song:

O *Bella Luna*, smile on me,
And on the seeds I sow,
And let the moonbeams shine from thee,
To make my garden *really* grow.

He blew the three kisses to the moon. And just to be sure, he blew three more.

As it did every year, Strega Nona's garden grew beautifully.

Big Anthony's garden

Strega Nona's garden

Soon, bright green *insalata*—salad—was on the table.

Fresh peas were added to the pasta from Strega Nona's pasta pot.

Green beans were cooked in olive oil.

And the other vegetables were growing beautifully, too.

Big Anthony's secret garden was growing as well.
But not quite so beautifully. It looked like a jungle!

Mamma mia, Big Anthony thought. *I can't let Bambolona—or Strega Nona—see this mess!*

Big Anthony's garden

Strega Nona's garden

Now it was time to harvest the vegetables that Strega Nona would keep over the winter.

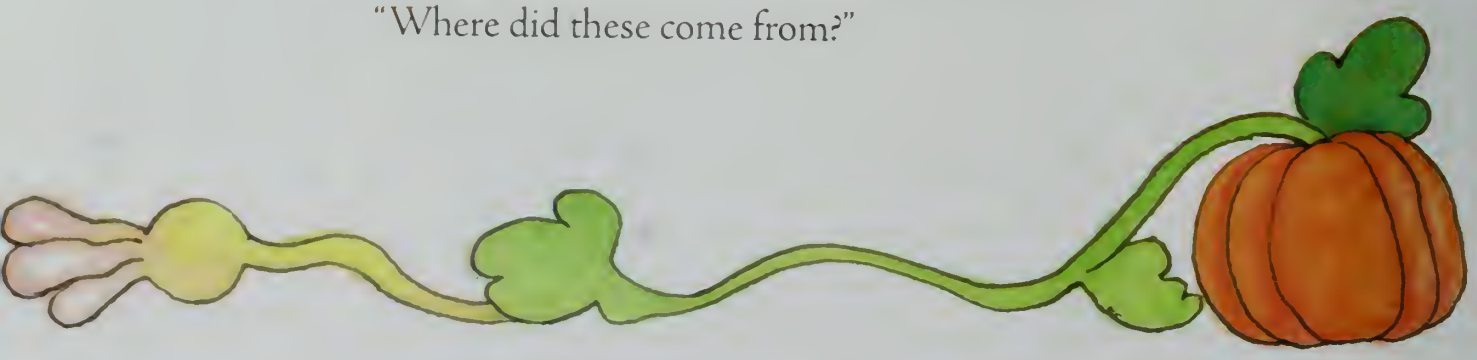
It wasn't long before the root cellar and the rafters in the kitchen were full. "*Molto bene*—very good!" said Strega Nona to Bambolona and Big Anthony. "A job well done. We all deserve a good rest."

But Big Anthony didn't have time to rest. He had other work to do.

"I've got to pick all my vegetables. What will I do with them?" he said.

The next morning, when Strega Nona opened her door, she found a big pile of vegetables.

"*Santo cielo*—good heavens," Strega Nona said. "Where did these come from?"

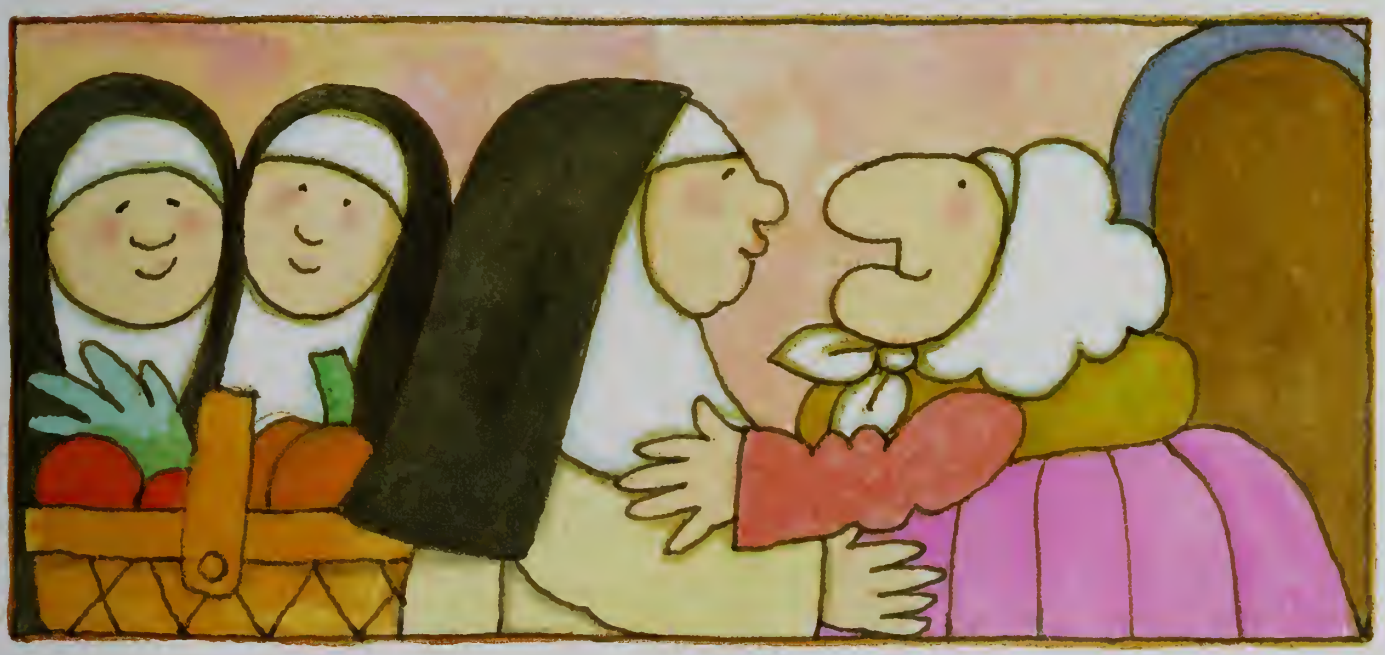


She called Big Anthony and Bambolona. "My children, please carry all these vegetables into the kitchen. *Grazie*—thank you."

Every morning there were more vegetables outside the door. Soon, there was hardly any room to move in the kitchen.

Maybe these are from the villagers, Strega Nona thought. *Perhaps they had too good of a harvest. Well, I must find out—and soon. If this goes on, I won't have room to sleep in my little bed at night!*

The next morning, Strega Nona packed a basket of vegetables. "I'll take these to the Sisters at the convent and maybe they'll know something."



"Oh, *grazie,* Strega Nona," the Mother Superior said. "You must have heard our prayers. Our garden didn't do well this season. In fact, no one's garden in the village did. We had too much rain down here, while you had lots of sun on your hill."

So Strega Nona went right to the mayor.

"*Si*—yes, Strega Nona," Signor Mayor said. "The harvest was poor this year."

"Well, I have more than enough to share," Strega Nona said. "I will have a Harvest Feast tomorrow evening at sundown. Tell everyone to come."

And Strega Nona practically ran up to her little house.

"Bambolona, Big Anthony, come quickly," Strega Nona said. "We have much work to do. I am going to have a Harvest Feast for all our friends and neighbors. We shall share our bounty!"

"*Evviva, evviva*—hurrah, hurrah for Strega Nona!" everyone shouted.

"*Arrivederci, buonanotte*—good-bye, good night,"
Strega Nona and her two helpers called out.

Strega Nona looked around at her empty kitchen. "Well, that took care of that," she said with a smile. "But I still wonder where all those vegetables came from." And she climbed into bed.

Later that night . . .

Tomie dePaola is one of the most popular children's book artist-authors of our time. The original *Strega Nona* won a Caldecott Honor Award, and more than 20 years later, her words of wisdom were featured in his *New York Times* bestseller *Brava, Strega Nona! A Heartwarming Pop-Up Book.*

/ PRAISE FOR

Brava, Strega Nona!

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"An absolutely gorgeous book about an Italian grandmother who had lived a life full of love and cooking!"
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